The costs and benefits of English medium instruction on quality and access in higher education

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Increased importance placed on English language education AND education through English:

*Globally we are seeing trends towards the use of English medium instruction...*

*...From Chile to Korea, we have seen major proposals for the greater use of English across the educational system* (Pennycook, 2010, p. 677)
Macaro’s (2018: 19) defines EMI as:

- *The use of the English language to teach academic subjects (other than English itself) in countries or jurisdictions where the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English’.*
English Medium Instruction

• “English medium instruction has become commonplace in many institutes of higher education where English is not the native language” (Wilkinson, 2013, p. 3)
  – Economic, social, political & educational drivers
• ‘Internationalisation at home’ trend
  – Half of the world’s international students are learning through English (Ball & Lindsay, 2013)
EMI is ‘the most significant trend in educational internationalization’ (Chapple, 2015: 1); an ‘unstoppable train’ (Macaro, 2015: 7).

**Europe** - There has been a 1115% growth in English Medium Instruction (EMI) programs in Europe in 13 years (Wächter & Maiworm 2015)

**China** – Huge policy reforms to encourage EMI at top universities (Lei and Hu, 2014).

**Japan** – doubled in 20 years.

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Benefits (Galloway et al., 2017)

• gaining access to cutting-edge knowledge
• increasing global competitiveness to raise international profile
• increasing income (and compensating for shortages at the domestic level)
• enhancing student and lecturer mobility
• enhancing the employability of graduates/international competencies
• improving English proficiency
Risks

Challenges

• language-related issues: English proficiency and the impact on national language(s)
• Cultural issues (Westernisation)
• social issues (inequalities)
• management, administration and resources (staff training, support for international students, management and faculty culture).
Risks: Students’ challenges

Lack of English proficiency influences student performance (Airey, 2011; Airey and Linder, 2006; Beckett and Li, 2012; Chapple, 2015; Doiz et al., 2012; Galloway et al, 2017; Hellekjaer, 2010; Tange, 2012; Tsuneyoshi, 2005):

- Detrimental effects on subject learning and understanding lessons and lectures
- Longer time to complete the course
- Chance of dropping out
- Problems communicating disciplinary content
- Asking/answering fewer questions
Part Two

STUDIES INTO MACRO-MESO-MICRO LEVEL EMI POLICIES IN CHINA
Three levels of policy implementation:

Study in China:
Study conducted in collaboration with, and funded by, British Council China

- **Macro**: Top-down policy making at the university level
- **Meso**: School and program-level policy implementation
- **Micro**: Course-level policy in practice
Sources of data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy scan</td>
<td>93 policy documents</td>
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<td></td>
<td>63 universities</td>
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<td>Field work</td>
<td>8 university visits</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26 interviewees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaires</td>
<td>96 EMI lecturers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>561 EMI students</td>
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</table>
Changes in focus toward English-only models
Leading to multiple models of EMI at school and program level

- EMA for international degree students only
- Bilingual courses for domestic students (e.g. 50-50 English-Chinese)
- All English courses for domestic students
- Content-driven English language courses for local students
Five main aims of formulating the institutional EMI policy were found in 65 documents:

1. cultivating talents/students (44 documents);
2. responding to globalisation and promoting internationalisation (41 documents);
3. improving the quality of teaching and curriculum (37 documents);
Benefits

Source: Faculty management

Interviews and fieldwork revealed:

• Attracting international students *****
• Improving internationalization in ranking criteria ***
• Providing English majors opportunities to use the language **
• Improving job prospects of graduates **
Benefits
Source: Students

Questionnaires suggested that students motivation to take EMI courses were:

1. Interest in the content of the course (M=3.02)
2. Study abroad opportunities
3. Job opportunities
4. To experience EMI
5. To learn or practice English (M=2.88)
Risks: The five largest challenges for EMI implementation (source: Teachers)

1. Mixed language ability of students in the same course
2. Differences in academic ability of students in the same course
3. Insufficient proficiency in Chinese language of international students
4. Insufficient proficiency in English of academic staff
5. Insufficient proficiency in English of domestic students
Macro-level: EMI language policy

Only 9% of policy documents raised concerns over students’ language, such as:

• mandatory English language courses before taking EMI
• introducing the vocabulary and references in English before taking EMI
• parallel classes based on students’ English proficiency
Meso-level: language considerations during EMI implementation

- Interviews revealed great variation in terms of students’ language requirements, such as:
  - Unclear language requirements for full degree programs (although different avenues for different students)
  - Student self-selection for EMI courses
  - Few cases of integrated preparatory language courses (usually only general English classes)
Micro-level

- Students have less self-efficacy that they can achieve a good grade in and EMI course (61% self-efficacy) compared to a Chinese medium course (82% self-efficacy)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-efficacy items related to confidence to succeed in EMI</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>n=</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confidence to get a high score in your course when it is taught in English? (0-100%)</td>
<td>62.6</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>399</td>
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<tr>
<td>Confidence to get a high score in your course when it is taught in mother tongue? (0-100%)</td>
<td>80.1</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>399</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Part Three

STUDIES INTO EMI CLASSROOM PRACTICES IN JAPAN
Also found EMI challenges are associated with: productive and receptive vocabulary knowledge, proficiency, and previous exposure to EMI in high school.

This was supported by qualitative data from both students and teachers.
(Rose et al, 2019; Thompson et al, 2019)

• Proficiency is important, but is not the MOST important thing...

• Language support classes are essential in emerging EMI contexts:
  – ESP/EAP (when done right) can lead to higher levels of success in content learning
  – ESP/EAP is powerful in developing self-efficacy, which also predicts success
Part Four

IMPLICATIONS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS AND EMI LECTURERS
What can language teachers do to support their students?

- EMI students need language proficiency development before undertaking EMI to ensure they can cope with content learning
  - Offer targeted ESP support to EMI students, rather than general English classes or general EAP classes
  - ESP courses need to match the needs of the EMI courses (to raise self-efficacy)
- Collect students’ background information, and offer additional support to students who have lower proficiency, lower vocabulary knowledge, or who have fewer prior experiences of learning through English
- EMI teachers also need support from language experts (teachers):
  - Collaborative efforts between the two types of teachers is beneficial in ensuring educational outcomes in EMI
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Link to slides and questionnaires: